



# Budget Equity 101

## The Budget Equity Tool

Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
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# Introduction to Budget Equity Tool

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County’s **Budget Equity Tool (BET)** is a way to integrate equity into departmental policies, practices, and program developments and their corresponding budget needs. This tool can help departments develop targeted and data-driven strategies and practices that can promote racial and economic equity and improve service performance for every Nashvillian. The tool is designed to determine whether budget allocations advance equitable outcomes for residents and Metro employees, measure the impact of budget decisions in terms of burdens or benefits for specific communities, and overall improve performance and service delivery for each department.

**Equity** is a key guiding principle for this year’s overall budgeting process. Equity within government refers to fair practices and policies that ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities while acknowledging and addressing past and present structural inequalities. Equity and **equality** are distinct. Equality means treating everyone as if their experiences are the same. Equity acknowledges and addresses past and present structural inequities that advantage some over others. Nashville is a uniquely diverse city. To feel the positive impact of this diversity, the City must continuously reassess and adjust its equity and inclusion efforts.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion supports the budget equity through development of the tool, training and technical assistance for its completion, reviewal each departments completed BET, and subsequent feedback. The BET is the first step in integrating equity in the budget decision making process and one of many ways departments can work with the Office of DEI.

The BET is a set of three strategies and corresponding questions that will guide departments to identify and articulate its equity priorities and how to implement them. Each department will submit their complete responses to each question to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through the online submission platform. The BET asks each department to analyze budget decisions and identify what comprehensive ways departments can prioritize equity.

## Budget Equity Tool Strategies

**Strategy One**  
**Adopt an Equity Lens**

**Strategy Two**  
**Be Data-driven**

**Strategy Three**  
**Promote Assessment and Accountability**

# Budget Equity Strategies

## 1. Adopt an Equity Lens

This first strategy evaluates if budget decisions and modification anticipate any potential burdens or benefits to historically underserved communities. These communities include populations who share a particular characteristic and geographic communities who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in any part our city's economic, social, and civic life. Applying an equity lens to the budget process requires departments to evaluate how specific groups benefit or face burdens based on budget modifications. These changes can affect both the residents who utilize a department's services, the contractors or outside stakeholders departments might work with, or staff within a department. The questions for this strategy will facilitate how to internalize an equity lens into the budget process and department operations.

## 2. Be Data-driven

When applied through an equity lens, being data-driven specifically refers to using population-level data and demographic and economic indicators to understand how budget decisions impact different parts of the city. Each department will identify the necessary data and plan to collect to support your department's equity goals. Disaggregated data (data that looks at separate population groups) and spatial data are the most powerful utilities in understanding which neighborhoods, geographic areas, populations, or employees are most impacted by the budget. The questions here will help departments ensure high-quality and equitable services for all residents.

## 3. Promote Assessment and Accountability

The final strategy requires departments to develop a way to evaluate if equity goals are met or progressing is being made. An attainable equity plan will build off the other two strategies and provide a framework for accurate and manageable assessment. Each department needs to set concrete milestones and measure progress on department equity goals. The budget is an opportunity to state the department's values and priorities. Proper assessment and subsequent accountability will help departments adhere to these values and realize departmental priorities.

# Instructions

## 1. Complete one Budget Equity Tool and limit responses to the space provided.

Each department will submit one tool. If a department has multiple divisions, consolidate the responses in one submission. A complete tool will address all aspects of the questions, utilizing the examples within the questions to guide the responses. Each tool must be submitted to the Budget Equity Tool [submission portal](#). JIS users should submit the tool by email to [Andrea Blackman](#) and copy [Sneh Patel](#) and [Michelle Boudreaux](#). The deadline for submission is February 11, 2022.

## 2. Contact the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for any questions related to the BET.

Departments need to reach out to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion if they have any questions about the BET. We will be reviewing each tool and making recommendations on adjustments or resubmissions that are necessary. Each department will also need to submit an articulation of how each budget investment furthers equity. Our office is available to assist each department with this portion of the budget process as well.

## 3. Utilize internal and external data sources to collect population-level data.

Department-specific and disaggregated can guide each department in determining the impact of proposed policies, plans, and budgetary decisions. Below are a list of internal and external data sources.

### Nashville sources:

[Nashville Open Data Portal](#)

[NashvilleMaps](#)

[Office of Performance Management](#)

[Davidson County Demographic Atlas](#)

[DEI Office Equity Dashboards](#)

### External sources:

[American Community Survey](#)

[US Census Bureau Data Equity Tools](#)

[National Equity Atlas](#)

[Racial Equity GIS Hub](#)

[Statistical Atlas](#)

## Strategy One: Adopt an Equity Lens

1. In what targeted ways will your department use the budgeting process to advance equity? (This can include adjustments in staffing, providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training opportunities for staff, or a commitment to delivering programs, services, research or other actions with a focus on reducing disparities experience in your department and the services provided) to the public.

## Strategy One: Adopt an Equity Lens

2. What persistent gaps or limitations in your overall budget could inhibit your department's ability to advance racial and economic equity? (This can include funding limitations outside the department's control, time constraints, or recognition that current funding is not adequate to address the extent and impact of racial and economic disparities.)

## Strategy One: Adopt an Equity Lens

**3. Describe what strategies your Department recommends to reduce the impact of barriers to or changes in services for low-income and communities of color.** (This can include a reduction in funds for services, lack of service accessibility for those with limited/no internet access, vehicle access, or limited English speaking-ability).

## Strategy Two: Be Data-Driven

4. What are specific programs, policies, practices, and structures within your overall budget and improvement requests that can address historical and recent instances of racial and economic inequity? (Please include the data sources and indicators for the wellbeing of the community, such as gauging quality of life, sustainability, performance, or healthiness, that you referenced to identify these racial and/or economic inequities.)

## Strategy Two: Be Data-Driven

5. Describe ways that your department used or will use racial and economic data to prioritize and develop criteria for resource distribution. What additional demographic data will your department collect, track, and analyze to assess equity impacts in the community moving forward and for future budget decisions?

## **Strategy Two: Be Data-Driven**

**6. How will your department use targeted data to help inform recruitment, retention, and promotion efforts for staff of color, including executive, supervisory, and entry-level staff and part-time and field staff?**

### **Strategy Three: Promote Assessment and Accountability**

**7. How will your proposed budget enhance your department's ability to engage with and include historically and recently neglected communities? How will that engagement be assessed and who will be a part of this self-assessment process? (This engagement can include improving leadership opportunities in government and community organizations, targeting community meetings, attracting diverse stakeholders, and increasing community outreach efforts.)**

### **Strategy Three: Promote Assessment and Accountability**

**8. How will your department allocate funding to ensure public documents, policies, meetings, etc. are readily accessible to the public, including the translation of documents to Spanish, ASL, and other languages. Does your department have funding or resources for interpretation services in all relevant places and programs (such as service desks, service phone lines, public meetings, job postings, etc.)?**

### **Strategy Three: Promote Assessment and Accountability**

**9. How will the department ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate the equity impact of budget modifications? How will the department measure outreach to underserved communities?**

## Next Steps

**Start conversations about equity within your department and the execution of its mission.**

**Revisit the budget equity tool to gauge progress being made.**

**Continuously be on the lookout for ways to integrate equity practices into your department.**

**Utilize the DEI office to assist your department in achieving its equity goals.**

## Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The office of DEI is here to answer any additional questions about the Budget Equity Tool or general questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion. There is also a training video and further information on the tool available on the Office of Management and Budget's SharePoint as well as the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website.

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